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## IS GENESIS 21:9-21 A DUPLICATE OF GENESIS 16:5-14?

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Is the account given of Hagar in Gen. 21:9-21 only a different version of that in Gen. 16:5-14? This is claimed by the advocates of the current analysis of Genesis. The reasons given for the opinion are these: (1) The use of Elohim for God in the second passage, Jehovah being used in the first; (2) the similarity of the accounts in other respects; (3) the difficulty of harmonizing the second passage with itself on the supposition that the events of the book are here described in chronological order. Conceding, however, the principle that different names for God are, in themselves, proper in the Bible and even to be expected, we find the two terms here wisely discriminated. The first passage which uses Jehovah, is directly concerned with the trial of Abraham's faith as it concerns the promised seed. What is said of Hagar is incidental to the main thought. The second passage, on the contrary, relates to the expulsion of Ishmael from Abraham's family and to his future history. From analogy where similar themes are treated in Genesis, it might be expected, were the name of God to be used here, that it would be Elohim. The history of Ishmael is carried on to the point where he marries a foreign wife and settles outside of Palestine. Excepting the use of Elohim, the language of the passage is generally admitted to have no peculiarities sufficient to distinguish it from the first.<sup>1</sup>

What then are the points of likeness leading to the conclusion that the two passages are but different versions of the same story? They both relate how Hagar, the handmaid of Abraham and Sarah, was driven from the family at Sarah's instigation, and that Hagar was comforted by an angel in the wilderness where she wandered. Here, in general, the points of likeness end.

<sup>1</sup> See Delitzsch, *Commentary, in loco*.

They hold no comparison, in number or quality, with those of unlikeness.

In the first passage the occasion of the outbreak against Hagar is her conception, causing her to despise Sarah who remains barren. In the second, it is the weaning of Isaac whom Sarah has already borne, and at whom, as it would appear, Hagar's son—who had been born still earlier and had now grown to boyhood—mocks. In the first case Sarah deals "hardly" with Hagar, so that she flees away alone. In the second, Abraham sends Hagar away with her child at God's command. In the first, the angel finds Hagar by a fountain of water "in the way to Shur" (cf. verse 14). In the second, the angel hears the cry of distress from Hagar and her child who are ready to perish from thirst in the "wilderness of Beersheba." In the first, the promise made respects Hagar's unborn child. In the second, it respects the same child now accompanying Hagar and is to the effect that he shall become a great people. The first account closes with a statement as to the name Hagar gave to the angel that appeared to her, and to the fountain where he appeared. The second, closes with a statement concerning Ishmael's maturing, marrying and the place where he dwelt.

It will be seen at a glance that the differences of the second account from the first are throughout of the nature to imply that the events it describes occurred several years after those described in the first. This conclusion harmonizes perfectly with the position which has been assigned to it by the author of Genesis in his book. He has inserted between the first and second accounts four chapters of history, including two theophanies, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham's experience with Abimelech in Gerar and, most important of all, the institution of the rite of circumcision together with an account of the circumcision of Ishmael *at the age of thirteen years* (17:25). According to the writer's chronology, Ishmael was sixteen or seventeen years old when the events took place which are recorded in the second passage (17:24, cf. 24: 5, 8). He was unborn at the time of those recorded in the first passage. So far, accordingly, there is almost everything to favor the view that we have here, not two

different accounts of the same story, but one account in two successive stages. It surely seems that the material of the second passage forms a strict and proper sequel to that of the first.

At this point our critics' third reason for their view properly comes in. It is that the second passage cannot be harmonized with itself on the supposition that, as compared with the first, it is simply a successive stage of the narrative. In 21:14 Abraham is represented, they affirm, as putting, besides a bottle of water, Ishmael on Hagar's shoulder when he sends her away. This they hold—and very properly if it be true—would be absurd, supposing him to be a youth of sixteen or seventeen years. That it is actually the thought of the writer that the child is put upon the shoulder, they say, is confirmed by the subsequent context which speaks of Hagar as casting her son under a shrub; and by the translators of the Septuagint who, beyond dispute, definitely state it as a fact. Hence, Ishmael cannot be thought of as more than a babe at this time.

Suppose, for a moment, that this reasoning be looked upon as valid, is the passage thus brought into harmony with itself? And is it thus proven to be a duplicate of the first? It would still represent a subsequent stage of the history, if not so late a stage; since in the first passage it is represented that Ishmael is unborn. It would also fail to harmonize (Gen. 21:9-21) with itself along the line of our critics' theory. It would, in fact, create more and greater difficulties than it would solve. Verse 9 represents that Hagar and her son were turned out on account of some misdemeanor ("mocking") on the latter's part. Surely then he was regarded as something more than a mere child. The same point of view is represented in verse 18 where Hagar is commanded to lift up the "lad" and take him by the hand. The Hebrew forbids the supposition that she is expected to support him like an infant upon her arm. The word rendered "lad," too, is not to be overlooked. It means a youth, and, properly, (etymologically) one of about the age which Ishmael, according to the previous history, would be. The word rendered child in verse 14 is less definite, but cannot be confined to one that would need to be borne.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Kings 12:8; Eccl. 4:13; Dan, 1:4, etc.

It is clear, then, if the passage is to be harmonized with itself—and with what goes before—the rendering of verse 14 accepted by our critics cannot be adopted. The translators of the Septuagint are blind guides here as so frequently elsewhere. How is it to be rendered? Why, just as it is in our Authorized and also our Revised Version; “Abraham took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away.” That is to say, he gave her the child to lead by the hand (as in verse 18), or to walk by her side, while putting the bottle of water on her shoulder. The construction does not make the thought as perspicuous as it might be made, but it is not unknown in Hebrew, nor in other languages. There is a similar one in Gen. 43:15: And the men “took double money in their hand, and Benjamin.” Of course, it is not meant that they took double money and Benjamin *in their hand*; but in the same sense that, while taking double money in their hand, they also took Benjamin along.

But what of the statement in verse 15: “She cast the child under one of the shrubs?” We cannot suppose that the writer means that, in a fit of petulance, Hagar *hurled* her infant child from her shoulder into the bushes. Note the expression, “one of the shrubs,” indicating a measure of care; and especially, note the following verse: The mother seated herself a little way off, weeping and saying: “Let me not look upon the death of the child.” So good a Hebraist as Delitzsch (referring to Jer. 38:6; cf. Matt. 15:30) holds that the word rendered “cast” means no more here than “hastily to lay down,” and that it pictures the “sudden resolve of hopeless resignation.” And Strack in his still more recent commentary renders the clause: “So she laid the child under a bush.” Supposing Ishmael to have been really exhausted and famishing, as the context represents, there is nothing out of place in the conduct of Hagar, but it is just what might have been expected from her. It is only when the “traditional” view is accepted accordingly, that Gen. 21:9–21 is found to be consistent with itself, with its preceding context, and with the chronology of the book.

One point more should not be omitted. Not only are our

critics obliged to forsake the Massoretic text in Gen. 21:9-21 and resort to the LXX. to gain even a measure of plausibility for their view, they are forced to a far more serious textual alteration in Gen. 16:8-10. To prevent misunderstanding, let the exact language of one of them be quoted (Addis, *the Oldest Book of Hebrew History*, p. 24): "As, however, the compiler meant to insert another story of Hagar's flight written by the Elohist, he was obliged to add the verses in brackets, viz., 8, 9, 10, and make Hagar return for a time to Sarah." That is to say, the compiler invented a situation in order to harmonize this passage with the later one. But if the passages are already in the best of harmony, as we think we have shown them to be, then the author of Genesis is not obnoxious to this very serious charge.